

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE BROWN COUNTY
VETERANS' RECOGNITION SUBCOMMITTEE**

Pursuant to Section 19.84, Wis. Stats., a regular meeting of the **Brown County Veterans' Recognition Subcommittee** was held on Tuesday, October 18, 2016 at 4:30 p.m. in Room 201 of the Northern Building, 305 E. Walnut Street, Green Bay, Wisconsin.

PRESENT: Chair Bernie Erickson, Ed Koslowski, Duane Pierce, Carl Soderberg, Jerry Polus, Jim Haskins, Louise Dahlke, Joe Witkowski, Cathy Williquette Lindsay

EXCUSED: Tracy Rosinski, Delores Pierce

****Running Total of Veterans' Certificates: 1778**

1. **Call Meeting to Order.**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Bernie Erickson at 4:30 pm.

2. **Invocation.**

3. **Approve/Modify Agenda.**

Motion made by Jim Haskins, seconded by Duane Pierce to approve. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. **Approve/Modify Minutes of September 20, 2016.**

Motion made by Ed Koslowski, seconded by Duane Pierce to approve. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. **Update re: Honor Rewards Program.**

Register of Deeds Cathy Williquette Lindsay informed that she continues to receive applications for the program on a regular basis. She recently dropped off materials at the Labor Council and also said a presentation was made by Jerry Polus at a veterans' conference. There are currently only four counties in Wisconsin that offer the Honor Rewards program and the program has drawn a lot of interest. Williquette Lindsay said the vendor who offers the program is not a vendor for all counties in the state, but they have indicated they would open Honor Rewards up to all counties. The enthusiasm for the program in Brown County is helping to springboard this around the state and she is hopeful that other counties will continue to sign up. There are currently 80 Brown County businesses signed up for the program

CVSO Jerry Polus said his office has done a number of mailings to different businesses about the program and they have received a few responses, but not as many as they had hoped for. Williquette Lindsay said once a business signs up she sends a thank you letter and promotional materials if they want them. Erickson will work on making some contacts to put information on the program out again to remind businesses of it. Williquette Lindsay also said she will reach out to the Howard businesses and Erickson suggested that Denmark and Pulaski businesses be contacted again. The best response to date has come from Military Avenue business, the Broadway District, Downtown Green Bay and De Pere.

Koslowski said he did a mailing to 100 businesses that donated or gave discounts last year for Veterans Day letting them know about the Honor Rewards program. There will be a table at the veterans' breakfast at the VFW on Veterans Day for veterans to sign up for the program. Witkowski suggested something be written up and given to the announcer at the event to read to those in attendance making them aware that they can sign up right at the event.

6. **Update re: 2017 Veterans' Appreciation Day at the Brown County Fair.**

A discussion was had regarding what group to honor at next year's event. Erickson said he googled 25th military anniversaries but did not come up with many viable results. One of the options discussed was to honor the spouses left behind. Polus informed he had spoken with someone who thought that the military support groups should be recognized. Another suggestion he heard was to recognize the wives of all military members and he also said that he heard a suggestion to honor the Purple Heart recipients. He said that could be expanded to include both disabled veterans and Purple Heart recipients. Koslowski said in the future, as the various groups are honored, we could ask their spouse or other supporting element to stand to be recognized.

Polus said he was surprised at the number of attendees for this year's event. He said 600 tickets were printed, but the minutes indicated that the attendance was estimated to be around 50. Koslowski said that that estimate was of the people that stepped forward to be honored. He said that 124 raffle tickets were handed out and Erickson estimated he handed out a little more than 50 dog tags and certificates. Polus said there appears to be a number of people who take tickets but do not attend the event. Koslowski said the Fair Board was talking about doing something electronically next year instead of having paper tickets. Haskins informed that at the last Fair Board meeting they indicated they do not have a problem with the paper tickets and everything at the gate went smoothly. Louise Dahlke said the people in the office who count the tickets questioned how many were printed because there were only a very few that were turned in and she thinks that the count of the raffle tickets gives a much better count than the actual tickets turned in. Pierce also estimated that at least 200 people went through the tent on the day of the event. Koslowski said the weather impacted the numbers.

In preparation for next year's event, Polus will contact both the Air Force Band and the Navy Band to see if either would be available to perform. A discussion was also had regarding the dog tags. Erickson suggested that in the future the gift be somewhat generic so that leftovers could be used from year to year. This was discussed briefly and a decision will be made on this closer to next year's event.

7. **Possible update re: Veterans Day events.**

Koslowski informed that he had received several inquiries from various organizations and veterans regarding events and offers for Veterans Day. He realizes that a lot of veterans watch for the article in the paper. He compiled the information on the NEW Veterans page regarding activities going on and started a draft of the newspaper article with this information. He also sent a card to all area veterans groups to gather information and included information regarding the Honor Rewards program. Koslowski has had several responses to these cards and the information received will be included in the newspaper article. He said any business that responds to the postcard mailed out will be included in the article. Erickson offered to contact the *Press Gazette* to provide them with the list when it is complete and he also noted that the *Ashwaubenon Press* would like to have Veterans Day information to publish.

Polus thanked Koslowski for the great job he did compiling information and noted that he would like to have a poster printed with the information. Koslowski will send the information he has to date to Polus. A discussion was also held with regard to radio stations and TV stations and it was suggested that information be provided to them so they can broadcast the information if they having something like a rolling screen of events. Koslowski said some of the information he gathered came from the Concordia University Veterans Resource Group which is a group consisting of a number of representatives of different organizations. The Concordia group seems very, very active and Koslowski feels they are heading in the right direction. He shared minutes of one of their meetings and said he will continue to do so in the future.

8. **Report from CVSO Jerry Polus.**

CVSO Jerry Polus reported the VA recently had a major change in how they are conducting disability compensation exams. Due to the backlog, they have contracted with an agency connected to, but not part of the VA, to do the exams. Polus was just made aware of this but noted that calls may be coming in about this and how veterans should respond to letters saying that they are to go to a non-VA doctor in Milwaukee for their exams. The purpose of this is for the VA to catch up on the backlog of claims because they do not have enough examiners to keep up with these in a timely manner. Polus said the VA is working claims nationwide and when a veteran files a claim it

goes to Milwaukee but that does not mean that Milwaukee is necessarily going to work the case. He said that if there are inquiries made to Soderberg's office he would ask these veterans to contact him for further information.

9. Comments from Carl Soderberg.

Soderberg said he has recently been made aware that social security numbers of veterans who get direct deposit electronic transfers for benefits like pension or retirements appear along with the transaction number on the bank statements the recipient gets monthly from their banks. There are vets protesting this because they do not want their social security numbers available in the event the bank statements get misplaced or into the wrong hands. Polus said when veterans request direct deposit, there is a section where a voided check is attached to give the name of the bank, account number and routing numbers, but that information goes directly to the VA. He has not had anyone file a complaint regarding social security numbers on their bank statements. Soderberg said he has seen one of these statements and would like to see if there is anything that can be done about this.

10. Report from Committee Members Present (Erickson, Dahlke, Haskins, Koslowski, Pierce, Rosinski & Witkowski).

-Erickson reported that Austin Straubel, whom the airport is named after, was inducted into the Aviators Hall of Fame at EAA in Oshkosh recently. A plaque was presented to the airport honoring Austin Straubel and a collage was created that will be displayed at the airport. This display should be in place sometime in November. Erickson has talked with the Airport Director about this Subcommittee having a meeting at the airport to see the collage and this has been arranged for December.

-Dahlke did not have anything to report.

-Haskins read an ad for Bellin Health that says that Bellin is honored to serve and help veterans. He also said he had seen an article online that said that President Obama had recently signed the Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2016 which extends various forms of funding of the Department of Veterans Affairs which pertains to benefits for nearly 37,000 veterans using the GI bill to attend college.

-Koslowski talked about the new State VA Suicide Prevention Program. Polus said he has not received anything official on the program yet, but he is aware that the program will be announced very soon. This is something that is coming out of Madison but Polus did not have any other specifics at this time. Koslowski continued that the Amvets group will be having a clover sale at the Arena Memorial before the next Packers game and the money raised will be used for gift cards to be distributed to veterans over the holidays.

-Pierce reported that the Amvets will be holding a meat raffle on November 12 beginning at 3:00 pm at Replay Bar and Grill across from the Fairgrounds. Proceeds will help veterans in Brown County. He also mentioned that he had recently received a notice that Vietnam Veterans who served in Thailand are being recognized for Agent Orange. Polus said that this is for a specific area and a specific period according to the most-recent copy of the Agent Orange newsletter.

Pierce also informed that the Green Bay Gamblers will hold their Military Night on Saturday, November 12. The game begins at 7:05 pm and free tickets for veterans and active personnel are available at Pearly Gates or at the door with a form of military ID.

-Witkowski shared that Ryan Funeral Home honored Clarence Lamers during October as indicated in the newspaper by flying their flag in his honor.

Polus wished to make the group aware of an individual who has been scamming people around town by claiming to be a veteran. He arrived in Green Bay in early spring, homeless and living out of his car. He is claiming to be a disabled veteran but he is not. He was in the service for one month and 16 days and was discharged for a physical disability not related to his military service. This person has scammed a lot of people at a lot of organizations. Polus said the person is in a wheelchair and noted that he is also a sex offender. He has been to a number of veterans' organizations, churches, businesses, etc. and is brash and not afraid to ask anyone for things.

11. Such Other Matters as Authorized by Law. None.

12. **Adjourn.**

Motion made by Jim Haskins, seconded by Duane Pierce to adjourn at 5:43 pm. Vote taken. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,

Therese Giannunzio
Recording Secretary